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Response to USPTO Office Action of 9/19/07

Confirmation Number: 7077

Examiner: Uzma Alam

Art Unit: 2157

Title: File Based Workflow System and Methods

Application Number: 09/974,594

Inventor: Norman Ken Ouchi

Date: December 15, 2007

Action is non-final

Claims 21-40 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Bengston U.S.P. 6,728,947.

Summary

Bengston does not teach the defining of file classifications nor the processing of files based on the classification of each file. The workflow file in Bengston is a single, implied file classification. Bengston does not provide for designating the classification of a file nor specifying a file of a designated file classification to be uploaded or downloaded at a workflow step. The claims are amended to clearly identify defining a set of file classifications and designating each file with a file classification as elements of the present invention as described in paragraph [0030].

Discussion

1) Bengston teaches a workflow distributing apparatus and method that implements the workflow by use of a workflow file that is passed from device to device in the route. The workflow file is downloaded to a device that implements a step in the workflow and uploaded to pass the workflow file to next device in the workflow route designated in the workflow file. A device or an editor can download, process and modify, and upload a workflow file.

2) Per claims 21, 28, and 36, Bengston column 2 lines 14-21; column 1 lines 33-47; column 5 lines 1-19; column 5 lines 45-67 column 8 lines 38-67; column 7 lines 30-57; column 10 lines 64-67; column 11 lines 1-30; column 11 lines 1-30,

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44-67; column 12; column 13 lines 1-8; column 15 lines 30-52, describe the workflow file and the processing of the workflow file including uploading and downloading of the workflow file. The workflow file represents a single file classification where all workflow files serve the same purpose and this single classification is implicit since Bengston does not provide means to specify the file classification. That is, Bengston does not provide for specifying, for example, a Bill of Material (BoM) file classification, and the uploading of a file classified as a BoM at a first workflow step and the downloading of the BoM file at a second workflow step. The present invention provides for defining file classifications and assigning a file classification to each file. The present invention further specifies the file classification for each step in the workflow that uploads or downloads a file.

Bengston provides for file names in the workflow file for processing at a workflow step. However, the specification of the file does not provide a file classification. Bengston does not teach file classification or a workflow that processes classified files.

The claims have been amended to claim more clearly the definition of a set of file classifications, the assignment of a file classification for a file, and the workflow processing of classified files.

3) Per claims 22 and 29, Bengston column 15 lines 30-45 describe the process flow from device x-1 to device x and then to device x+1 where the workflow file passed from device x-1 to device x provides the process x+1 for device x+1 where device x completes process step x, modifies the workflow file to indicate the completion of process x, and passes the workflow file to device x+1 to perform process x+1. Column 15 lines 30-45 describe the modification and passing of the workflow file by each device receiving the workflow file and passing the workflow file to the succeeding device. Passing a workflow file to a succeeding device does not define a parent-child relationship between the workflow file for device x and the workflow file for device x+1. Bengston does not describe storing this relationship nor accessing the workflow files using this relationship. Bengston is mute as to what happens to copies of the workflow

files, if any, since it appears that the workflow file is modified by each device before passing to the next device and copies of intermediate versions of workflow files are not saved. Hence, in Bengston, there is only one copy of an active workflow file and even if passing the workflow file is construed as a parent-child relationship, there is only one copy of the workflow file which has no parent nor child.

Bengston does not teach a parent-child relationship between classified files where a first file with a first classification is related as the parent to a second file with a second classification. Again, Bengston does not teach classification of files and processing of classified files.

4) Per claims 23, 31, and 40, Bengston column 15 lines 30-45 does not give any reference to the file name assigned to a workflow file. For Bengston to function, two distinct workflow files cannot have the same file name (including the directory path) since the mechanism that passes the workflow file from a first device to a second device cannot distinguish between the two files. Bengston provides for file names in a workflow file but does not describe any capability to distinguish between two files with the same file name.

Bengston does not teach a first file and a second file having the same file name and uploaded in workflow steps to be distinguishable.

5) Per claims 24 and 32, Bengston column 12 lines 50-67; column 13 lines 1-10 describe the process flow from device $12n$ to device $12n+1$ where device $12n$ scans the workflow file to find Next, the next step in the workflow, where Next = device $12n+1$, completes the process step, modifies the workflow file to indicate the completion for $12n$, and passes the workflow file to device $12n+1$. Bengston does not describe or illustrate a loop in the workflow nor distinguishing the files uploaded for each iteration of the loop as distinguishable.

6) Per claims 25, 33, 34, and 39, Bengston column 8 lines 50-65; column 9 lines 1-15 describe conditional branching based on error conditions or other parameters as determined by a device. Bengston does not disclose a screen where a user at a route step can select a branch choice. Again, Bengston does not teach a workflow for processing classified files.

7) Per claims 26 and 35, Bengston column 7 lines 5-56 describe the downloading and editing of a workflow file. The workflow file is one file classification and implicit in Bengston. Bengston does not provide for classifying files nor specifying the downloading of files based on the file classification.

8) Per claims 27, 30, and 38, Bengston column 15 lines 30-45 describes the passing of a workflow file from device x-1 to device x to device x+1. Bengston does not disclose a parent-child relationship nor the ability to download files based on a parent-child relationship.

Claims 21, 28, and 36 have been amended to more clearly claim the definition of file classifications, designation of file classification for a file, and the upload or download of the file at a workflow step based on the file classification.

Claims are grouped 21-27, 28-35, and 36-40 where claims 21, 28, and 36 are independent claims.

The attention and assistance of the examiner is greatly appreciated.

A Word document file can be sent to the Examiner to ease reading the claims with mark-up and without mark-up tags. Please send an e-mail to me at Ken.Ouchi@avidtecs.com and I will send you the file.

Please call me at 408-757-5862 after you have read this response.

Respectfully submitted



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